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A WOMAN'S RELIQUARY

Edward Dowden

A WOMAN'S RELIQUARY

LONDON
J. M. DENT & SONS LTD.
BEDFORD STREET, STRAND, W.C.
1914

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"A Woman's Reliquary" was first published in November 1913, *at the Cuala Press, Dundrum, Co. Dublin, by Miss Elizabeth C. Yeats, in an edition of three hundred copies, now nearly exhausted. No second editions are printed by the Cuala Press. Hence the need for the present republication.*

This sequence of Lyrics is now issued as third volume of Edward Dowden's "Poems."

Though the authorship is no longer veiled, the publishers retain the original preface, in which the writer concealed himself under the garb of Editor of an old MS. that had been confided to him. That disguise was from the outset a semi-transparent one.

NOTE

A REVIEWER not long since congratulated me on the possession of some interesting manuscripts, which, as a snapper-up of unconsidered trifles, I have had the good fortune to come across. Some years ago I purchased a handful of books from a lady, now dead, and among them a slender morocco-bound volume containing the verses which here I print. She told me that she was the only surviving relation, a niece of the writer of these poems. "You may do what you please with them," she said; "the writer and the person addressed are both dead; the marriage was childless." No wrong therefore can be done to any one by the present publication. A sequence of a hundred love lyrics addressed to a wife is perhaps too much for the general public; but possibly some of the verses

may ultimately find their way into anthologies. My task as editor has been that of securing an accurate text; and, for convenience of reference, I have prefixed a title to each poem, which however may be disregarded by a reader of the sequence. The general title *A Woman's Reliquary* is written on the first page of the manuscript.

EDWARD DOWDEN.

A WOMAN'S RELIQUARY

The secret may be whispered in the shrine,
Life's central word, or cried in all men's ears
Down from the mountain height, it yet is mine
—He only who had heard the secret hears.

A WOMAN'S RELIQUARY

I

THE ROSARY

The beads thus at your girdle hung
  Have little lustre as you see,
My verses faintly said or sung,
  A poor believer's rosary.

Yet think for what they stand, nor part
  With these, if only coloured clay;
This meant an *Ave* from his heart,
  And this, though pale, a *Gloria*.

II

SONG A SHADOW

The little breezes of my song
  Waft perfumes, each a pallid wraith
Of hope, of memories treasured long,
  And ever love, and ever faith:

Or think them shadows that across
  The everlasting hills have run,
Whose life was merely sunshine's loss;
  Yet flying shades confess the sun.

III

SILENCE AND SPEECH

Others, with desolate arms, have flung
  Their hands to heaven, and cried their grief,
And found, because a woe was sung,
  Sad measured fragments of relief.

If such my lot, these lips were dumb;
  Song were a broken, idle toy;
Lean to me, my beloved; come,
  And hear what may be told of joy.

IV

A GARDEN INCLOSED

My soul a garden is inclosed,
  But never wall was builded there
Save heaven's bright boundary circumposed,
  The depths of blue untrammell'd air.

No garth is guarded half so sure,
  And here are blossoms for the bee,
And here, to make my bourne secure,
  Horizons of infinity.

V

THE WELL

I stoop'd to many streams that run
  Through the hot plain, and drank with greed,
Lores and new lores!—yet found not one
  But left some smatch of marish-weed.

Blest be this well that holds the heaven
  Radiant and calm within its breast!
Who stoopeth here to him is given
  Joy at the midmost heart of rest.

VI

AFAR

I saw you then how far away,
  As one might see at morning's birth
Some Oread of strange hills at play
  On the uplifted rim of earth;

Nothing beyond you but the light
  Of dawn and heaven's pellucid shell;
So with God's world, swung clear of night,
  How should not all be safe and well?

VII

PREMONITIONS

Auroral pulses; quiverings
  Too faint to flush the pallid East;
Nor yet the stir of earliest wings;
  But morn awakens, night has ceased.

Dreams and the phantoms of the dark
  Troop earthwards; see, across the lawn
A light breath lifts the leaves, and hark!
  The alleluias of the dawn.

VIII

BUD AND BLOSSOM

O sweet and blind commotion of the sap
  When the first ray thrills in the folded flower!
Virginal rapture tremulous; some great hap
  Befallen; a law declared; a quickening power.

And henceforth life shall surely have a part
  In all that joy which makes the many One;
The petals sever; the whole scented heart
  Lies naked for encounter with the sun.

IX

THE HAVEN

It was not love, but o'er the array
  Of maiden faces clustering there
My glance careered, which well might stay,
  For this was frank and that was fair.

No haven for my sail that drove,
  No pharos; sunniest isles I passed;
Then suddenly—it was not love—
  The haven, and an anchor cast.

X

MANNA

I lived on manna day and night,
So long! and still could live indeed;
Nor murmured that such bread was light,
My heaven-sent coriander-seed;

I lived on manna night and day,
No other food I craved or knew;
Without my tent each morn it lay
Pearl-pure, and sweet as honey-dew.

XI

LOVE'S NUDITY

Naked this soul, for good or ill,
Must stand before her eyes;
So dear, so dread, his word and will
Who builded Paradise.

What if that gaze confirm my fear?
What if those eyes approve?
What if, so seen, she call me near
To hide me in her love?

XII

MIRACLES

That day you came and went faith grew
  In miracle; one while
The dream swam up—was all not true?—
  Of wondering Theophile;

Snows on the roofs, the ways, outspread;
  But lo! the radiant boy,
And in heap'd arms great roses red
  Pluck'd from God's garth of joy;

Pluck'd from God's garth of joy, and all
  The air was one warm stream
Of summer. Can such things befall?
  Or is it but a dream?

XIII

LOVE'S LAW

If it were possible to spare
  Your ears my dreaded truth,
Fashions of friendship I might wear
  For pride perhaps or ruth.

But this is law, not choice—to lay
  My whole soul in your hand;
My part is only to obey,
  And yours to understand.

My part to speak and there to end;
  Be you strict arbiter;
Grant nought of all I need, my friend,
  If granting be to err.

XIV

LOVE'S ARTISTRY

Search me and know me; understand
  Sense, spirit, passion, thought:
Yet wherefore doubt? The craftsman's hand
  Should know the thing it wrought.

Here joy has dealt with me, here pain;
  Here ran your hand, here stay'd:
Was not a foolish carver fain
  Of his own ivory maid?

XV

CREDO QUIA IMPOSSIBILE

O silence, now all golden, what a word,
  A star, into your shadowy waters fell!
I dare believe a shining thing I heard,
  Because impossible.

XVI

HARVEST

Wide harvest: all the plain
  Is wealth; on every tree
Fulfilment; not in vain
  May's hope, June's prophecy.

Joy is the vintager
  Who treads the wine-press; lo!
A great, a golden year,
  And, stamp'd, the clusters flow.

XVII

A MOMENT

Free forester of Dian's train,
  Yet swift arms girdled her about
At one glad word: and how refrain?
  The dykes were down, the floods were out:

Life was abroad; it was not I
  Who wrought a thing I knew not of;
It was the whole world's ecstasy
  That woke and trembled into love.

XVIII

GRIEF IN JOY

Grave joy; heaven's arch is deep
  And clear; still, still endures
That grief although I cease to weep;
  Take it, for I am yours:

And not less pure appears
  My heaven encircling earth,
And tenderer for that rain of tears;
  Grave joy—a sacred birth.

XIX

GIVING AND TAKING

Cross over from your side
  Of giver for my sake,
Conceive what praises hide,
  Know once the love I take:

So faith will rest assured,
  Nor praise and wonder ache,
Joy may be well endured,
  Cross over for my sake.

XX

THE INTERPRETER

Have I not look'd away from you?
  When to the compass of one face
Did I contract the revenue
  Of beauty or the springs of grace?

But if a deeper heaven lies bare
  Now; and a more enchanted sea
Heaves; if the lit clouds are aware;
  If the first star with mystery

Is laden; if some tremulous need
  Stirs in the midnight's brooding wings,
Shall I not search your eyes to read
  The secret in the face of things?

XXI

DECEMBER

Flowerless December, but this morn
  Of whirling rain and ruining cloud
Behold! a flower of light is born
  By all heaven's gentleness o'erbow'd;

Earth-born, yet scarce to earth akin;
  The chalice opening late; no rose—
That is for youth; yet peer within!
  Like gold the lily-pollen glows.

XXII

"I WILL"

At last achievement past gainsay;
  "I will" was spoken, and "I will";
Southward we sped toward cape and bay
  And talk'd of cloud and stream and hill.

Pearl of great price, not bought indeed,
  Given to my breast, I own with awe,
Since given where greatest was the need
  Also for you this thing was law.

XXIII

LOVE'S SACRAMENT

Let not thy sacramental bread and wine,
  Lord Love, be found so sweet upon my lips
That I forget the Presence, which is thine;
  Let not the lighted cloud the light eclipse.

Nay, for a joy o'erripe turns sullenness
  Or wanes; heaven's gift is ever at the prime;
Thy will it is in thine own way to bless;
  Angels descend the ladder angels climb.

XXIV

AVE ATQUE VALE

Ah Love! When all is gain'd,
  Graces no heart can tell,
Then first I know the attain'd
  Is unattainable.

The wave that climbs and falls
  Is still in radiant flight,
Wind-driven, more drawn by calls
  Borne from the infinite.

Horizons ever new,
  Cries that will ne'er be mute,
Love's welcome an adieu,
  Love's conquest a pursuit.

XXV

THE RESTING PLACE

Where her heart throbs (come life, come death)
  I lay my hand, nor can rehearse
The thoughts, but know that love and faith
  Are pillars of the universe.

XXVI

IMPERSONAL

Awe fell on me: we two shall be no more
  Estrays, but still some part, whate'er ensue,
Of the vast sea that heaves without a shore,
  Life limitless, love infinite—we two;

A sparkle in the smile of God's glad deep,
  A fruit that falls not from the unfading tree,
A flash of colour in the bow where leap
  The sunlit torrents of eternity.

XXVII

BABBLEMENT

Once more my idle word
  Craves to possess your ear,
All heard before, all heard
  Only once more to hear.

This endless babbling stream
  Far in the hills arose,
Through gloom it ran and gleam,
  The chaliced rock o'erflows;

And should a slumbrous peace
  Fall on your lids, the rill
Scarce heeds, nor yet will cease
  Because inaudible.

XXVIII

GRATITUDE

Now silence! weighing down a steep descent
  I sink to ultimate peace in final good;
Below life's joyance lies this pure content,
  Where all I am is merely gratitude.

XXIX

EMBAYED

Where bliss is calm as deep
  Here let my shallop rest;
Heaven bends above us; sleep
  Invades her sacred breast:

A mirror'd heaven below;
  O'erhead—love's infinite;
Here would I rest, nor know
  The rapids of delight.

XXX

THE BOWMAN

No stronghold brave she gained; in one so poor
  No treasure-house; and yet I make my claim—
Ay, proud to be the crenell'd aperture
  Through which the unerring Bowman took his aim.

And if his arrow struck the noblest heart,
  How should I be remorseful? By his grace
Toward his high stand she glanced with sudden start,
  And through the loophole dusk beheld His face.

XXXI

GIFT ON GIFT

Love's kingdom first, a spirit divine,
I sought and all his righteousness;
These things are added and are mine;
He who would bless would doubly bless.

Love's kingdom which long since I sought
I have not left, I cannot leave;
But in his hand the Master brought
To Eden's bower the gracious Eve.

XXXII

THE CHAPEL

The starry chapel, where I bow
  My head in thanks or lift in praise,
Has altars four; at each a vow
  I make, at each a hymn I raise.

Her brain: whose poignant quivering flame
  Leaps, laughs and lightens from the pyre;
Dry logs I gathered—such my claim—
  And laid in order: hers the fire.

Her soul: not as the Scribes it spoke,
  Sundering things real from things that seem;
I felt the austere control; I woke,
  And on the altar left a dream.

Her breast, Love's shrine: for very awe
  So long, so long, I stood apart;
Then bow'd to dread benignant law,
  And on the coals I cast a heart.

An altar last, whose incensed air
  Quickens the breath like wildrose wine
Inhaled when all the land is fair,
  And girdling heaven shows earth divine.

XXXIII

EXCHANGES

Receive my gift, Belovéd, such a dower
As heaven rejects not, and the breathing soil
Offers as purest incense—your own power
In blissful swift recoil.

All April gleams; breeze, sunshine, shower renew
The earth, and skyward floats a vernal drift;
The lit clouds sunder; see, a tenderer blue
Owns the reverting gift.

XXXIV

SURPRISES

The presage tells of rest, deep rest;
Joy enters wing'd for flight;
The clouds that pause around the West
Are thrill'd and fill'd with light.

The presage tells of joy: such need,
Such hope, is straight withdrawn;
Rest, lucid rest, has Love decreed,
The hush of earliest dawn.

XXXV

CHARITY AND KNOWLEDGE

Faith, Hope and Charity—these three,
The greatest Charity, 'tis writ;
But " Trinity in Unity "
The word were had I utter'd it.

For what is Hope but Love that bends
Forth in the race with quickening breath?
And there are hours when Love ascends
To lose and find itself in Faith.

Knowledge, 'tis written, has her place
Lower than Love; and yet I own
At times this seems Love's loveliest grace—
Merely to know and to be known.

XXXVI

THE POTTER'S WHEEL

You took this fictile clay—a heart—
  Shaped it to what you chose to make;
Applaud a little your own art,
  Nay, cherish for the artist's sake.

To pressure light and strict it grew,
  Curved as the potter's hand gave law;
Was it a chalice, wine or dew
  Glimmering to hold, that you foresaw?

Nor think your artistry at end;
  Still whirls the wheel—O joy and fear!—
Mar for a moment, still to mend,
  Fashion it unto honour, Dear.

XXXVII

THE HOLY OF HOLIES

My brave, marauding honey-bee,
  Down the deep flower-neck you have push'd
Your way to some dear mystery
  Of gladness, and your hum is hush'd.

Even in a blossom's heart there lies
  An inmost chamber of the heart,
Mystery beyond all mysteries,
  Where the last veil is drawn apart.

Found you a sun-warm'd palace there,
  A white tent where you lie enfurl'd,
A cell, a temple, a chaste lair
  That holds the sweetness of the world?

O my wise honey-bee! such joy
  Lives not, you know, with buzz or bruit;
Be happy in your hush'd employ;
  I pause, I ponder, and am mute.

XXXVIII

GOLD HAIR

That glory mass'd, your girlhood's vaunt,
  The gold great hair by me unseen,
Was it the aureole of a saint?
  Was it the rigol of a queen?

Yet here is wealth enough to bribe
  A world of hearts; take but this one
Bright ingot sever'd from its tribe,
  This wheat-sheaf in the August sun.

XXXIX

THE PITCHER

With what marmoreal grace the maid
  Bore her brimm'd pitcher from the well,
One white arm curved, a hip that sway'd,
  A foot that firmly fell.

The vessel on my shoulder set
  Fluctuates with full felicity;
Add strength to bear my gladness, let
  My burden steady me.

XL

TURF

Thank God for simple, honest, close-knit turf,
Sound footing for plain feet; nor moss, nor mire;
No silvery quicksand, no hot sulphurous scurf
Flung from a turmoil'd fire.

So far your hand has led me: what is worth
A question now of all the heavens conceal?
Here shall we lie, and better love the Earth,
And let the planets reel.

XLI

FONS SIGNATUS

Still the clear spirit's dignity;
To me love's inmost shrine reveal'd;
Yet with no squander'd sweetness she
Gives largess from the fountain seal'd.

Never the blossom overblown,
And therefore a perpetual bride,
For whom the spirit's loosen'd zone
Has worth, nor will be laid aside.

XLII

THE PLUMMET

I let my plummet sink and sink
  Into this sea of blessing; when,
Or where should it touch shoal? I think
  Love lies beyond our furthest ken.

Above, the sun-smit waves career;
  They have their voices wild and free;
Below them, where no eye can peer,
  Love's great glad taciturnity.

XLIII

COMMUNITY

Of all her joys the Earth has need;
  The kindly Mother finds her part
In plumping nut, and feathering seed,
  And heart that ripens upon heart.

Her gifts to her own breast return—
  Pride of the marshall'd spears of grain,
Passion of clouds that flush and burn,
  And love's pulsating old refrain.

With all her infants' glee is stirred
  The spirit within her, grave and sweet,
The leap of lamb, the cry of bird,
  And hands that touch and lips that meet.

And it may be that half her store
  Of life and warmth is treasured up
From hearts like ours, her wine that bore,
  And danced her dance, and crown'd her cup.

O blind it were to deem that we
  Are in our proper bliss inisled!
The old Mother own'd community
  Who bended over us and smiled.

XLIV

INDULGENCES

Ah, why has Love no general store
  Wherein their merits in excess
Of duty saints like you could pour,
  And folk like me their happiness?

Through us the sun would mount, and want
  Be lighten'd; each might have his share;
Love's Vicar could indulgence grant
  Plenary or particular.

XLV

LOVE TOKENS

Two gifts: mere sparkling granite this;
  Why given that day my heart inquires;
I think because in earth's abyss
  It felt the glow of central fires.

And now the earliest daffodils,
  Sun-lovers, comrades of the breeze,
Through which earth's sudden rapture thrills,
  And spring's awaken'd ecstasies.

XLVI

BRITOMART

Smile if you will at my dear need,
  O bright-hair'd daughter of the North!
Yes, you are stronger; but we read
  Out of the strong came sweetness forth.

With me life's proper flame aspires
  Through needs; each day new call I make
For bread, for wine, man's heart desires;
  But Dian strength would give, not take.

Yet who was she that lay and toss'd,
  O'ercome with mighty throes of heart,
Deep-struck, her virgin freedom lost?
  —Not Amoret, it was Britomart.

XLVII

LOVE'S CHORD

Stand off from me; be still your own;
  Love's perfect chord maintains the sense
Through harmony, not unison,
  Of finest difference.

See not as I see; set your thought
  Against my thought; call up your will
To grapple mine; gay bouts we fought,
  Let us be wrestlers still.

Then, if we cannot choose but mate
  And mingle wholly, it will be
The doom of law, a starry fate,
  And glad necessity.

XLVIII

HOURS AND MOMENTS

Yes, if need were we two could dare
To part, and still the days were bright,
Though less than these swift days that wear
Their nimbus of glad morn, glad night.

Good hours would chime upon the clock;
But ah, the moments! which could be
The wing'd keybearer that unlocks
The gates of immortality?

XLIX

OLD LETTERS

Your letters flinging their good seed—
  Wit, counsel, wisdom, thought—
Words that could shape my dream, my deed,
  I miss them, do I not?

Yes, but how words dissect, divide
  Our truths; their swiftest play
Hastens too slowly, strikes too wide,
  Falters or falls away.

And now our meanings, whole and sole,
  From sense to spirit outleap;
Truth now with joy is integral,
  Deep answers unto deep.

So when speech comes to claim its share,
  We feel, all words beneath,
Tremblings of heart oracular,
  Accords of life and death.

L

THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE

Framed in old verse Italian
  See Love in triumph charioted,
His captives follow maid and man
  With corded wrist and bended head:

Glad children rather should be here,
  Young heirs who never felt the rod,
Clad in the love that casts out fear,
  And freedom of the sons of God.

LI

THE BOOK OF HOURS

Blown sea-cliff, dreaming pasturage,
  The moor, broad cornland flaunting flowers,
Each place we moved in is a page
  Of my illumined Book of Hours.

Bird, bloom and bee are in the marge,
  How fresh the tinctures, free the grace!
But in the midst and limn'd at large
  The aureoled wonder of her face.

LII

THE COUCH

Sure resting-place above the shock
Of waters, safe from clambering waves,
Here be your couch, the living rock
Lull'd by the gulphing of the caves.

I shall be human still, and feast
My sense, your spy for brave things done:
Hug nature you, a drowsed sea-beast,
Slow-breathing, saturate with the sun.

LIII

SEA-ANEMONES

Look! the waves' wash has reach'd this drain'd alcove:
Its crimson blooms retracted know at hand
The tidal flow; peer now! they thrill, they move,
Petals and anthers waver and expand.

"Praised, praised be God for thee," my heart has cried,
"My little brother, the anemone!
My spirit has also heard a jubilant tide,
And known the blissful whelming of the sea."

LIV

BURNET ROSES

On sand-dunes of this western sea
  Here, mid the bent grass, roses shine,
Clear-carven, chaliced ivory,
  Brimm'd with the summer's perfumed wine.

Never those orbed splendours fed
  From garden-mould, June's tended train,
Crimson or gold, soft-bosoméd,
  Darted such transport to the brain.

How well with sweetness strength agrees!
  The liberal air, the spacious light,
The sounding waves, have fashioned these;
  Take them; such things are yours by right.

LV

SPRING IN AUTUMN

We are alone with sea and sun;
  Give the child's instinct in you play,
And where the laughing ripples run
  Step barefoot touch'd by wind and spray;

And let me smile; the autumn day
  Mimics the springtime; seasons meet
One moment; let my fancies stray
  With the glad ripples round your feet.

LVI

THE PILGRIM

The sunset trance is in her eyes;
  I know the spirit's homeless flight;
Estranged from earth, a pilgrim hies
  To seek the founts of light.

Love frames no cage, love weaves no net;
  I would not whisper a recall,
Nor choose to capture what is yet
  Remote and virginal.

LVII

SUNRISE

Lo! on yon eastern marge the sun:
  The waves a miracle confess,
And awed, illumined tremors run
  Through the sea-spaces measureless.

I knew that mystery of the spear,
  The shaft of flame, the poignant ray;
But knew not if 'twere bliss or fear
  Such seizure by the arisen day.

LVIII

THE LOST DIAN

And if I lose your image, Dear,
  One moment in the joy of you,
Think, the moon-marvel in the mere
  A moment since was mirror'd true:

There lay the Dian, till at once
  Thrill'd all the waters, and, behold!
The disk is scatter'd, and there runs
  A rippled race of quivering gold.

LIX

SECRETS

Noontide and summer; not a breeze
  Abroad, and all the landscape shines;
Yet hush; what murmur'd mysteries!
  There sounds a going in the pines.

Our spirits, rooted firm in earth,
  Reach heavenward; not a branch astir;
Yet secrets as of death and birth
  Are breath'd, nor crave interpreter.

LX

CLOUDS

Hourlong to-day I watch'd across the plain
  The speechless intercourse of cloud and hill,
Approaches, hushed enfoldings, and again
  Slow disengagements, sunderings soft and still.

Anon in ancient hollows, where the stream
  Tumbles, or where the pinewood climbs the steep,
The fleecy vapours nestled as in dream,
  Separate, yet side by side like folded sheep.

Last, height and heaven were bare; no pearly flake
  But was a truant of the winnowing wind:
What gift of strength did those pale wanderers take?
  What gift of sweetness did they leave behind?

LXI

SONG AND SUNSET

Tumultuous splendours in the West,
  A brazier fuming chrysoprase,
Southward translucent amethyst
  Veils mountain-capes and mountain-bays.

Extravagance of pomp! yet still,
  As yester-evening grey, I hear
The self-same robin's frugal bill
  Pipe the same carol thin and clear.

LXII

NATURE'S NEED

We are two foam-flakes on a stream,
  Two thistle-downs upon the air;
Yet joy is therefore not a dream;
  Bear us, glad Power, we know not where!

The mighty Mother has a need
  Through us to ease her blissful ache;
Blow, breeze, and drive the lucky seed,
  Flow, stream, and dance the water-flake.

LXIII

WAKING

Waking is wonder; summer airs
  Ripple the wheat-field, where a crew
Of wing'd sweet thieves in flights, in pairs,
  Their knavish craft pursue.

They dip, lurk, eddy, swing and sway
  Upon the stalk—glad, wrangling throats;
While silent to the wind-fleck'd bay
  Glide home the pilchard-boats.

Waking is infant joy new born;
  And how should wonder e'er be dead
For me, who lean toward the morn
  Across so dear a head?

LXIV

THE VILLAGE WELL

Beneath the beech-tree's dome of shade,
  Her pitcher on the coping-stone,
There at the well the village-maid
  Sits, muses, leans and dreams alone.

She gazes down where glimmering lies
  The girdled fount, discovering there
Those mirror'd stars which are her eyes,
  That wavering gold which is her hair.

Nor know I whether memories haunt
  These waters, or some hidden fire
Would be allay'd, some nameless want,
  The trouble of some dim desire.

Lean, lean, Beloved, you alone,
  Here where my happiness, a well,
Trembles, here where a face has shone
  Secluded and adorable.

Gaze yet again where glimmering lies
  The water of this fount of grace,
And watch intent! What if there rise
  Wavering to sight the Naiad's face!

LXV

BLOSSOMS

Bring, bring a rose to sate the eye,
  Bring orchids for my sake,
Wing'd like some Orient butterfly,
  And spotted like the snake.

But if I pluck a flower for you,
  Let be the imperial rose,
Let be the blooms of vapoury mew
  Hot garden-walls inclose.

Gorse from a wild hill's golden crown,
  For plough or spade too poor;
A hare-bell from the windy down,
  Heath from the purple moor;

It must have dared to meet the gale,
  It must have loved the skies,
Have seen great sunset glories fail,
  And watch'd the dawn uprise.

LXVI

A FAREWELL

The silver chime! and we must part;
  Our lark shall be no nightingale:
I go; one moment heart on heart,
  Enough for all the day's avail.

So hidden in the depth of day
  In toil, in turmoil, that must be,
This moment will fling forth a ray
  On time from white eternity.

LXVII

NEW HORIZONS

If love were but a curious maze
  With halt at midmost, who would choose
Swift triumph? Better Dear delays,
  And blind, bewildering avenues.

The frankness of the sea, the sky,
  Become you, you who grant the whole
Fearless, and still the marges fly,
  And deeper heavens allure the soul.

LXVIII

PAST AND PRESENT

Those rare unearthly years of ours
  Moved on no fairer heavenlier range
Than these of full co-operant powers
  Yet make earth's harvest-sunshine strange.

Strange that the spirit of a star
  Should stoop and enter at my door,
Still fire and dew as when afar,
  Yet human to the ripe heart's core.

And in my soul a fount that gush'd,
  Lucid with wandering mountain-gleams,
In waterbreaks leap'd valeward, flush'd
  With all its tributary streams.

LXIX

POVERTY AND PLENTY

I can remember when a child
  I gave my fortune all away,
Two halfpennies, for my heart was wild
  To bless that bedesman faint and grey.

And still I see his mute appeal,
  The craving in his eyes I see,
Still hear his blessing and can feel
  My leap of infant ecstasy.

Therefore I urge not—" Tell me true,
  Say, are you happy? " nor take thought
Because, being wholly given to you,
  I never yet could give you aught.

That you were rich, that I was poor,
  And beggary all the trade I had,
'Tis this that makes my soul secure—
  You gave and cannot but be glad.

LXX

WISE FOOLISHNESS

I posed you with Athene's spear,
A virgin warrior, fancy-free;
How could I then divine that dear
And deep irrationality?

Fools both: you spendthrift in desire
So poor a man as me to bless,
And I who at my altar-fire
Sang hymns to Wisdom's patroness.

Ah! and how swift time plies the wing;
Here sit we Doctors in Love's school;
So learned we know the wisest thing
On earth is to have play'd the fool.

O wise dear foolishness! Such lore
We grey-hair'd sages try to preach
To youngsters now. Nay, let's give o'er,
Our rede to them is foreign speech.

LXXI

CHILDHOOD

Her earliest love (down, jealous rage!)
  Was but the King of Scotland's son,
Crusading Kenneth; eight her age,
  My sweet, small, amorous simpleton.

Vanished the northern wizardry;
  Next Harold slain in desperate fight,
Found by the Swan-neck (that was *she*;)
  The third, I think, Aslauga's knight.

Whereon names follow quick and thick,
  But somewhat fretted by the moth,
Save one all gold—Theodoric!
  Tut, child, to choose an Ostrogoth!

But when the lists were set one day,
  Who like a thunderbolt bore down
All champions, bore the prize away?
  Dear, a poor clerk in scholar's gown.

LXXII

THE RIVAL

Your rival—yes, and not an hour
  Out of my sight; be jealous now!
The same grave face of tender power,
  The same pure lips and brooding brow.

The hair mere sunshine wefted fine;
  The eyes that look'd through life and death;
The spirit alive in every line,
  Which grew to be my pulse, my breath.

Room in my heart must be for two,
  Nor know I which I should prefer,
Your rival who long since was you,
  Or you proved all I dreamed of her.

LXXIII

SIXTEEN YEARS

Echoes of shawms and trumpets, Dear,
  Vibrate; this day you came to me;
Think! now begins our sixteenth year;
  Praise, praise, and proud humility.

Think of a man assurance saves,
  Sustains yet whelms in life and limb;
O strong salvation, all thy waves
  And billows have gone over him!

LXXIV

TRUTHS AND TRUTH

We chased ideas years ago,
  Truths seem'd our quarry day by day;
Has all our fire now smoulder'd low,
  The hunter's passion for his prey?

Or are we victors after strife?
  Merchants retired from rich employ?
Does truth put on the limbs of Life,
  And wear the fervid face of Joy?

LXXV

MADONNA

Always before me as we climb'd the height,
  Always than mine a wider, steadier view,
Always at call a hand's grasp firm, though light,
  Till where she had stood I now was standing
    too.

Fain, fain to serve am I; yet be my part
  To need a refuge, claim protectiveness,
So serving best the great Madonna-heart;
  My gift to know all blessing, hers to bless.

LXXVI

JUSTICE

Your cry was ever " Justice! " Did I deem
Justice a stern-brow'd goddess, sword in hand?
Stern-brow'd in truth, and in her eyes a gleam
Indignant, on her lips a dread command.

Yet you have shown her with a tenderer brow,
Sowing fair deeds, giver of cheer, of coins,
Strict, wise, benignant; and I name her now
" Love with the lighted lamp and girded loins."

LXXVII

LIBERALITY

The sun is not less free to all
  In largess, though he yield
Some lovelier light angelical
  To yonder hillside field.

The stream has mirth for all the wild
  And all the wood, though here
—Listen!—its laughter of a child
  Ring blithest and most clear.

Gladden the region; give away,
  To each that claims, a part;
I grasp no miser's gold who lay
  This hand upon your heart.

LXXVIII

THE WAVE

Once more—how vain, how vain!—
  The wave breaks up the shore,
Pale praise, unfruitful thanks again
  And hopeless speech once more.

High as the wave may run
  It can but leave behind
One foam-bell glittering in the sun,
  And quivering to the wind.

LXXIX

SPEECH A CLOUD

If all my words are but a cloud,
  Half sun-suffused, half darkening you,
And winnowing song, or low or loud,
  Scant help to let the radiance through,

Fling down some wide aerial shaft
  Of sunbeams, an illumined stair,
That, past the shadowings of my craft,
  Watchers may yet divine you there;

A stair from heaven to earth whereon
  White Presences may come and go
Envoys, who at Love's bidding run,
  To breathe your name to men below.

LXXX

THE SOURCE

Live water insuppressible,
  Upwelling new and still the same,
Slender but lucid—who can tell
  From what strong ribs of earth it came?

Look how the grains of yellow sand
  Are toss'd! Now stoop; with finger-tip
Touch, or in hollow of your hand
  Bear one light ripple to your lip.

So streams have sprung that broaden free
  Past fane deep-fronted, bulwark brave;
This will not bear an argosy;
  Enough! Egeria scoop'd the wave.

LXXXI

THE VIOLIN

No lucky Stradivarius this!
  Poor fiddle, lacking craftsman's name;
Yet poised, and to the bow submiss,
  Some touch of music's rapture came.

Is it because your hand can win
  From every yearning thing its best?
Is it because, glad violin,
  It lean'd and trembled toward your breast?

LXXXII

SEA-MEWS' CRIES

If we were nested with a brood,
  Safe in the fork twixt bough and bough,
Heaven's silence or earth's quietude
  Long warblings might allow.

But sea-bird from the crag that flies
  Across the voiceful plain, or flits
From ridge to ridge that climbs and cries,
  Such shrill swift call befits.

LXXXIII

THE NORTH WIND

A wanderer in the mist was I,
  Faltering 'mid pallid wreaths adrift,
With naught to hope, resist, descry,
  And not a dream the cloud could lift.

You were the North wind, not for ease
  Issuing, but strength to slay despair;
I lean'd forth, drank the quickening breeze,
  Look'd—and behold, the heaven was bare!

And whether luck it was, or grace,
  When thus I gazed around, abroad,
Blind feet had borne me to a place
  That seem'd the very mount of God.

LXXXIV

THE RAPIDS

Where most the rapids swirl'd I lay
  Motionless in our frail canoe;
The Indian guide whose toil seem'd play,
  Lithe oarsman at the prow, were you.

Yet what a need of practised eye,
  Of poise or turn of wrist what need,
To shoot secure through jeopardy
  With such a breathless, quivering speed!

And ever while the oar you plied
  I knew no thought of life or death,
Nor felt the snakelike waters glide,
  But lived in some deep heaven of faith.

LXXXV

THE CHALLENGE

Brain challenged brain to onset fierce,
  Youth was our cartel-bearer gay,
And desperate was the quart-and-tierce,
  But all my pride was in your play.

Honest rencounters, brain with brain;
  And yet with springing heart I viewed
The dexterous arm that thrust amain,
  And shifting grace of attitude.

Times alter; calm the seasons move;
  Yet come, one bout! I throw my gage,
And dare you, who can never prove
  That youth was half so blest as age.

LXXXVI

KNOWLEDGE AND TRUTH

I circled wide, the sea-mew's way,
  Sway'd as in blissful idleness,
Loll'd on the wave yet found my prey
  And gather'd knowledge none the less.

Pillar'd on air you tower'd, a thing
  Intense in rest, that knew nor dip
Nor dart, but hung on vibrant wing;
  —You fell, and truth was in your grip.

LXXXVII

EXCHANGE OF SEX

In some strange world, ere stars were old,
  Or here ere ocean whelm'd a land,
You were a bearded sea-king bold,
  I, a white maiden on the strand.

Strong arms compell'd her to your bark,
  Light borne for all your ring-wrought gear;
You swept the waves from dawn to dark,
  While pride was trembling through her fear.

She half remembers in a dream
  Grey towers of her sea-eagle's nest;
Sunshine and storm, the gloom, the gleam,
  Warmth, might, male gladness on her breast.

You had your will, and very life
  Of yours was then her cherish'd store;
Can you recall when I was wife,
  And thoughts of yours grew babes I bore?

So now if sweet authority
  Touches, though in a different sex,
Your love, and I approve it, why
  Should instincts from the prime perplex?

LXXXVIII

THE STONE-BREAKER

On life's roadside I sit and break
  Poor learning's stones for pay;
Nor is the trade too bad, I make
  My half-a-crown a day.

My good hour comes; 'tis past the noon,
  And sure as sure can be
With kerchief'd head and kilted gown
  The mistress steps toward me;

Not slim perhaps as once she was,
  Yet still some girlish grace,
Not with light footing of the lass
  But just as brave a face;

She bears the can, she bears the mug,
  The bulging handkerchief;
Beneath the hedge is shelter snug,
  O hour of my relief!

And sure such bread is angels' food,
  Such cheese heaven's honey-dew;
Kind are the eyes as when I wooed,
  The heart as stout and true.

So when she goes my hammer plies
  Livelier on learning's stones,
Till home I trudge to meet her eyes,
  Maybe with aching bones.

LXXXIX

THE NEW CIRCE

Mistress of innocent spells, your brain,
A kindlier Circe, rules my rout
Of thoughts and fancies. What a train
Gather their Queen about!

Smile at their awkward gambolling
With queenly-humorous, wise regard;
And let them fling and spring and cling,
Your rabble, ounce and pard.

Praise their quaint fawnings if you can,
Or pierce at once through the disguise,
Their thwarted gestures tell of man,
And human are their eyes.

XC

DISCIPLINE

Your strength at first controll'd the man
  Too many an aim diverts, dilates;
He knew constraint and swiftlier ran
  As through the Danube's Iron Gates.

So 'twas in youth; your strength no less
  Confirms me now, but you assuage
The strong control; your gentleness
  Has made me great in this my age.

XCI

EVENTIDE

"Old friends," so have they named us, "now grown one,
"And twilight peace for cares will make amends,
"Nothing so natural underneath the sun
"As such soft fading radiance for old friends."

But we have wing'd our level western flight
Beyond the glimmering marge, the cloud-confine,
To heavens where peace is rapture of the light,
And all the shoreless sea is hyaline.

XCII

TRANSITION

Low drops the sun, but on these sands
The waves still laugh and clap their hands,
  By awe untouch'd or fear;
Life is for them an ecstasy,
Nor child nor lamb has keener cry
  Of joy, though night be near.

But turn! yon mountains take the light
Aware of transits infinite,
  Clear-edged, intense, severe,
Back'd by pure spaces measureless;
In fortitude, submissiveness,
    Some word of God they hear.

XCIII

GLOAMING

They come like shadows, so depart;
  Theirs is the morn; the eventide
Is mine; life may have worn my heart;
  They pass, and you abide.

They troop, each man his several way,
  Expectant; I expect the night;
But while you sit by me and stay
  At even time shall be light.

XCIV

IN THE STORM

The storm is on us! How the flood
  Is whipp'd, the woodlands roar!
Cloud topples westward over cloud,
  We'll see the sun no more.

Because we had our brave repast,
  Great light, clear airs, nor dearth
Of life or love, we stem the blast
  And keep our faith in earth.

XCV

BETHESDA

One writes " Your words had power to sain
And soothe a grief "; but I, no fool,
Know whence this virtue mastering pain,
The secret of Bethesda's pool.

For common needs the waters lay
Sufficient, nor would I contemn;
Then dawn'd a high miraculous day;
An angel came and troubled them.

XCVI

WINNINGS

That gambler, he who raked the gold,
  Each shadow'd eye a glittering spark,
Rose calm, push'd back the curtain-fold,
  And took his way into the dark.

My gold is gift of grace, not luck,
  But if a call should sound from far,
Back the dark curtain I could pluck,
  And front—perchance the morning-star.

XCVII

LOVE AND DEATH

If at the summons we, in sudden flight
With equal beat and poise of wing, beneath
Love's arm of benediction flash'd from light,
To lose ourselves on the dark breast of Death;

Such flight were blissful close—The shadow'd face
Might wear a smile maternal, and, arrived
At that dim goal, a murmuring word of grace
Might thrill the vacant air—" These two have lived."

XCVIII

THE BLESSED ONES

Because I am in love with life,
  Because I breathe a finer air
Above the din and dust of strife,
  The dead have grown more fair.

Their eyes send forth a sunset beam,
  A tenderer ray on mine uplift;
Their voices sound a twilight stream,
  This also is your gift.

XCIX

INTIMATE SORROW

Here leave me: something is your own
  By old prerogatives of blood;
Enter the shadow and alone,
  I ask not closer neighbourhood.

Mine too the grief; but Memory fills
  A deeper chalice with your tears;
Shootings there are and sudden thrills
  From all the half-forgotten years.

Pass through the portal dark and low,
  Single; without I keep my stand;
Yet take from me, before you go,
  The touch of no indifferent hand.

C

LACHRYMATORIES

These lachrymatories we behold
  Were ravish'd from some sepulchre;
Tears fell and heads were bow'd of old;
  They turn'd and Life was lawgiver.

Praise, praise and thanks, by day, by night
  Be yours, not chiefly that you laid
Those kind assuaging hands and light
  With all strong comfort on my head;

But that within Life's radiant shrine,
  Where stands the glowing altar, where
The flame that leaps is fed with wine,
  My vase of tears you bade me bear.

CI

LOVE'S LORD

When weight of all the garner'd years
  Bows me, and praise must find relief
In harvest-song, and smiles and tears
  Twist in the band that binds my sheaf;

Thou known Unknown, dark, radiant sea
  In whom we live, in whom we move,
My spirit must lose itself in Thee,
  Crying a name—Life, Light, or Love.

Think not the bird, from rung to rung
  That climbs his high aerial stair,
Tells all his joy; the things unsung
  Of his blue heaven are song's despair.

Think not the spray that gleams and flies
  From the toss'd crest is all the wave;
And feel my dear deep silences
  Through loves that laud, through calls that
    crave.

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THE TEMPLE PRESS
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